

Delay in Publishing Data Threatens to Diminish Credibility of Findings

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WASHINGTON, June 6—The decision today by President Ford to delay indefinitely the publication of Vice President Rockefeller's report on activities of the Central Intelligence Agency raised the clear possibility that the outcome of the five-month-long White House inquiry would be the opposite of what had been intended.

The President had hoped to assure the nation, as he noted in accepting the blue-bound report of Mr. Rockefeller's blue ribbon commission this morning, that the intelligence community would operate "within the law."

But the White House announcement that the report would not be made public until Mr. Ford had read it—if then—and the circumstances surrounding the presentation of the report by Mr. Rockefeller threatened to diminish the credibility of the commission's findings when they did emerge.

The transmittal ceremony in the President's Oval Office occurred amid reports that the White House had ordered Mr. Rockefeller to delete from his commission's findings a long section dealing with charges of C.I.A. involvement in plots to assassinate foreign leaders.

Mr. Rockefeller insisted that it had never been meant to include the subject in the commission's formal published findings. Ron Nessen, the White House press secretary, strenuously denied that Mr. Ford or his aides had any involvement in shaping the commission's report.

But their statements appeared to conflict with earlier ones. Moreover, spokesmen for the White House and the commission kept referring questions to one another, and neither gave a satisfactory explanation for the abandonment of the commission's plans to make the report public this weekend.

The situation produced the most acrimonious White House news briefing since Mr. Ford was elevated to the Presidency last August. Some reporters questioned Mr. Nessen about a possible "cover-up" attempt. One newsman called the Presidential spokesman a liar. Mr. Nessen, unable to divert the focus of his daily briefing to other subjects, stalked angrily from the White House briefing room.

At issue were seeming inconsistencies or, at best, uncertainties in the commission of the Rockefeller commission's inquiry.

Mr. Rockefeller told the Pres-

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ident in a conversation presumably meant to be overheard by White House correspondents that the commission had omitted any reference to the alleged assassination plots because "we did not have time" to complete a review of them.

Mr. Ford extended the life of the commission from three months to five after the alleged assassination plots became known in March. Neither Mr. Nessen nor the commission's spokesman had an explanation for the decision to disband the panel without completing the assassination inquiry rather than to seek a second extension if more time was needed.

Mr. Rockefeller said this morning that the commission had intended all along to present its findings on the assassination charges in a separate, private report to Mr. Ford. But C. Douglas Dillon, the commission's vice chairman, told reporters two weeks ago that the published findings would contain a section on the char-

Senior intelligence officials were known to have expected, as late as yesterday, that the matter would be covered in the published report.

The discrepancies left unsettled which, if any, of three plausible explanations for the deletion of the material might be correct. Some Administration officials suggested privately that the White House had been troubled by the inclusion of classified information in a draft of the commission report and had prevailed on the panel to keep it secret.

Denied by Nessen

A second theory being offered was that Mr. Ford did not wish to make public unsubstantiated inferences that President Kennedy had been a party to C.I.A. planning to assassinate Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba—either because the evidence was inconclusive or because it would be more advantageous politically to let such inferences arise from the later reports of Congressional investigating committees dom-

A third possible explanation being discussed, and specifically denied by Mr. Nessen, is that the Congressional investigators might produce hard evidence that would make an inconclusive report from Mr. Rockefeller's panel appear to have been a whitewash.

The decision to issue a White House commission report without reference to the assassination inquiry was not made known until last night, following a public dispute between Mr. Rockefeller and Senator Frank Church, the chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities, over the extent of possible misconduct by the C.I.A.

Mr. Rockefeller told reporters on Monday that his panel had found violations of law by the agency but that "in comparison to the total effort they are not major." Senator Church, an Idaho Democrat, said Wednesday to kill a foreign leader and added, "don't regard murder plots as a minor matter."

The White House refusal to issue the report now, as the

commission had intended, appeared to bolster the suggestion that it had been redrafted and thus could not be duplicated in sufficient quantity before next week at the earliest.

Mr. Nessen insisted today that "the one and only copy of the full report is in the hands of the President," and that the White House had never intended to permit its duplication until Mr. Ford had read it. But well-placed officials said that a number of printed copies of the report had been produced at the Government Printing Office.

Mr. Nessen described the President's copy as a set of "page proofs"—a printed, rather than typed, version.

Cover-up Denied

One White House official said that Mr. Ford's announced intention to supply Senator Church with a copy of the private commission findings on the assassination charges proved that no cover-up was intended.

But this did not dispel the

open cynicism with which White House correspondents, who had been assured after Watergate of an open Ford Administration, greeted Mr. Nessen's statement today that "the White House has no idea what has transpired" in a commission chaired by the Vice President.

Many of the questions put to Mr. Nessen seemed hostile, and many of his replies seemed evasive. One reporter told Mr. Nessen that he acted as if the Rockefeller Commission were "some foreign country" with which communication was difficult. Another newsman muttered, and then at Mr. Nessen's request said aloud, that he wondered if former President Richard M. Nixon had been "consulted on this cover-up."

Twice rebuffed in efforts to guide the briefing to less volatile subjects, Mr. Nessen ultimately slammed shut his thick binder of briefing notes, strode from the briefing room and declared through assistants that he was too busy to meet with correspondents for the rest of the day.